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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/NCE MICHELLE LABONTE

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [HU](#)
SUBJECT: HUNGARY'S ELECTIONS: MDF STAYIN' ALIVE
(C-RE6-00145)

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Classified By: Political Officer Carleton Bulkin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (U) MDF's unexpected return to Parliament demonstrated that the right wing is too diverse to be represented by a monolithic party. MDF views itself as a "constructive" opposition party and sees its electoral success as a chance to breathe new life into the ranks. The party has said repeatedly that it will cooperate with other parties on an issue-by issue basis, especially in regard to anti-corruption efforts, a flat tax and government reform, but it is unlikely that the disparate elements of the right will coalesce.

The Vision

¶2. (C) Newly-minted MDF MP Kornel Almassy told Embassy on May 3 that MDF views itself as the "normal" and "constructive" opposition party. As such, Almassy said, the party plans to cooperate with the governing coalition in certain areas. MDF MP Andras Csaky echoed these sentiments to Embassy on May 4. Even though Csaky ruled out any chance of "institutional" cooperation with FIDESZ, he did say that MDF would cooperate with FIDESZ on an "issue-by-issue" basis. Csaky also observed that the elections prove that a single "right wing" party cannot win by itself. If conservatives wish to win elections, they will have to do so through cooperation, not domination, he said.

Parliamentary Priorities

¶3. (C) Almassy explained to Embassy that MDF would work with the governing coalition on government reforms such as reducing the number of ministries and parliamentary committees. (Note: Every party is entitled to at least one seat on each committee. However, MDF only has eleven MPs, so individual MDF MPs have nothing to lose if the number of committees is reduced. MDF's first priority in the new Parliament would be to stamp out corruption. To that end, MDF plans to amend the public procurement laws and so reduce the potential for abuse. According to Almassy, MDF would also work to pass a flat tax, and he specifically mentioned cooperating with SZDSZ on this issue, even if they disagreed on the ideal rate. Lesser issues for MDF that were not focused on during the campaign, include privatizing health care and amending immigration and citizenship laws to benefit

ethnic Hungarians abroad. Almassy pointed out that even if MDF supports the coalition on reforms, MDF's votes would still not be enough to create the two-thirds "super majority" necessary to pass certain constitutional and procedural reforms (highlighting PM Gyurcsany's need to garner support from a broad cross-section of the right).

Long-Term Strategy

¶4. (C) Csaky and Almassy agreed that there would be no changes in party leadership. Specifically, they said that Herenyi would continue as caucus leader while David would remain as party chair and a vice speaker in Parliament. (Note: Traditionally, each party is entitled to one vice-speaker position. FIDESZ is rumbling about reducing the number of vice-speaker slots, which is clearly an attempt to block David from the position as punishment for her lack of campaign cooperation with FIDESZ. However, MDF appears confident in the electorate's clear preference for a selection of conservative parties, and Csaky told Embassy that the party desires to establish a broader power base by increasing its representation in local governments.

Comment

¶5. (C) MDF resentment at FIDESZ's attempts to smother it, and Orban's vendetta against MDF Chair Ibolya David virtually guarantee that there will be no combining of the right. Csaky's observations seem to be supported by the fortunes of the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) which ran on a joint ticket with FIDESZ. While the MDF's primary focus is

the middle class, many believe KDNP represents religious conservatives. The potential presence of three conservative parties suggests that conservatives are more heterogeneous than FIDESZ believes. Now that the initial existential crisis has passed, MDF leaders appear to be breathing more easily. As such, they are able to speak of long-term plans. While the party may never dominate the right, its prospects for continued existence are better than they were in the last election cycle. What role MDF will play in terms of the unfolding multi-party dynamics of the right remains to be seen.

¶6. (U) Visit Embassy Budapest's classified website:
www.state.gov.gov/p/eur/budapest/index.cfm.
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